

FORT LESLEY J. McNAIR
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Washington, D.C.

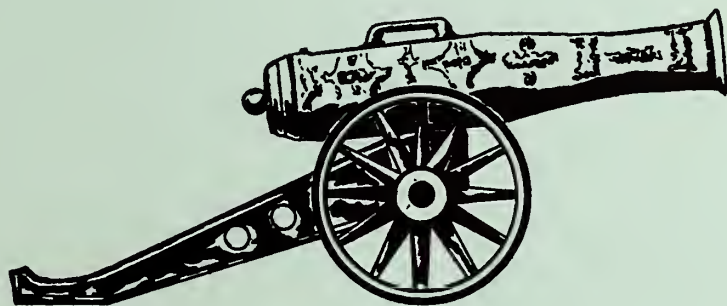
Fort Lesley J. McNair

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

FORT LESLEY J. McNAIR

an
historical
landmark

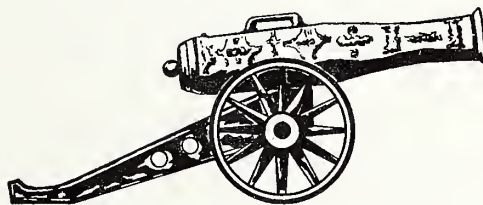


Washington D.C.



FORT LESLEY J. McNAIR

an
historical
landmark



Washington D.C.



MISSION

Fort Lesley J. McNair is a Class I Installation established under the jurisdiction of the Commanding General, Military District of Washington. The mission of the post includes providing quarters and facilities for General and Flag Officers of the Department of Defense; logistical support, as assigned by the Commanding General of the Military District of Washington, for the National War College; Industrial College of the Armed Forces; Inter-American Defense College; Company "A," 1st Battle Group, 3rd Infantry; 67th Ordnance Detachment (ED); Headquarters Company, (EM) Military District of Washington, U. S. Army; for the enlisted men of Headquarters U. S. Army Material Command; and to various satellited units, organizations, and activities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is hoped that this booklet will answer for our readers some of the questions about Fort Lesley J. McNair that have plagued the authors during their stay here.

Much of the material and many of the pictures contained in the booklet were found in the files of the Washington Star, the National Archives, the Lincoln Museum, the Department of Interior National Park Service, the D. C. Public Library Washingtoniana Division, the Congressional Library, the Office of Military History, the Army Library, the Visual Aids Branch of the National War College, and the Naval Museum.

Without the help of employees of these agencies, too many to list here, it would have been impossible to prepare this booklet for you. Their enthusiasm and courtesy when asked for assistance has been, and is, greatly appreciated.

Special thanks are due Mr. Harvey G. Stailey, Director Visual Aids Branch, National War College, for his invaluable technical assistance, and to the Visual Aids staff for the actual printing of the booklet.

Barbara Goddard
Palmer D. Wells

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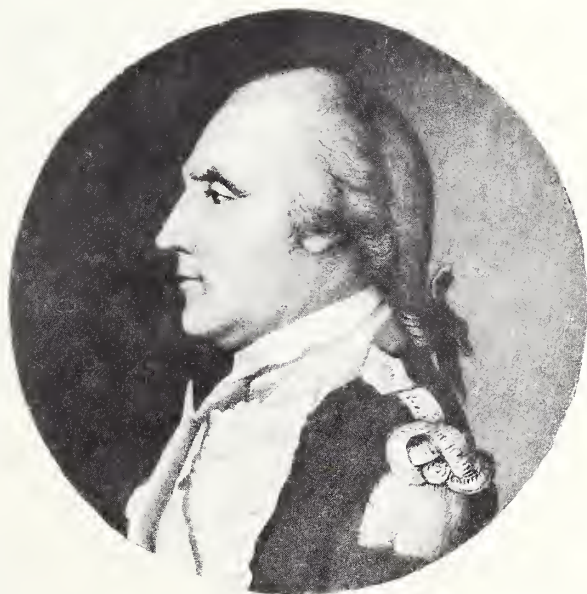
EARLY HISTORY

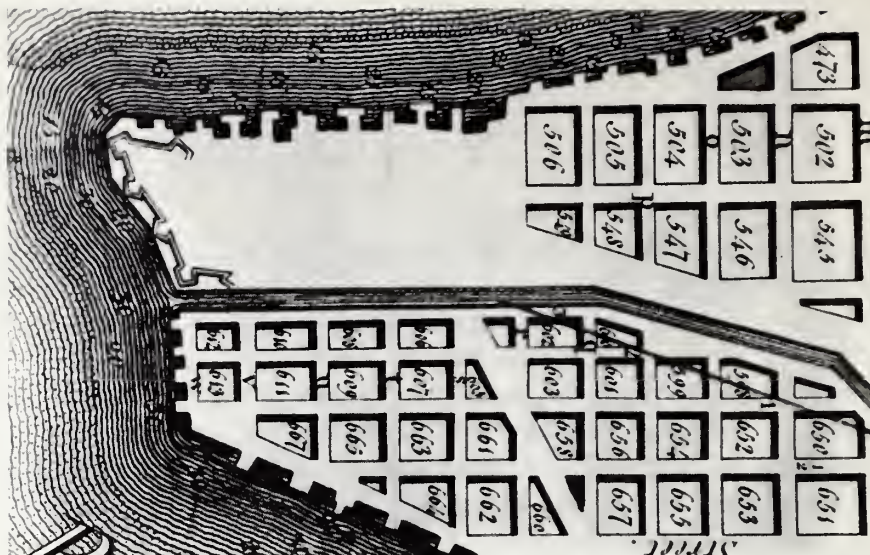
An historic land area in the Nation's capital, now known as Fort Lesley J. McNair, has a history of active military duty longer than most of today's active Army posts.

It has grown from 28 acres, 2 roods, and 31 poles on Greenleaf's Point set aside by George Washington as a military reservation from the land acquired for the Federal City in 1790 to its present 89.5 acres through acquisition and by earth fill in areas once covered by marshes and shallow water.

Old records do not disclose the exact date of the first military work, but Major Pierre C. L'Enfant, designer of the Federal City, evidently intended it to be the site of a fort as a part of his city plan for Washington.

The first reference to the area of the post as such is in a deed of trust by Notley Young in 1791. George Washington, as a part of his activity in establishing the Federal City, referred to it in an instrument signed on March 2, 1797.





Several old maps, some as early as 1792, show the area as a military fortification.

The first fortification here is believed to have been in 1794 -- a one-gun battery mounted behind earth breastworks. While no definite record is available, this is probably correct. At any rate, the spot was known as the "Fort" by 1803 and it appears to have been in continuous use as a military post from the date of Washington's instrument of March 2, 1794.

Title to the site on Greenleaf's Point was secured by executive order dated July 25, 1798.

Early Contour

Once a narrow, irregular finger of land, at the mouth of the Anacostia River where it empties into the Potomac, the post now has an almost quadrangular shaped land area. It has a formal smooth contour bounded by sturdy stone seawalls along the water front and thick brick walls separating it from the city.

Once "Fort At Turkey Buzzard"

The history of the post reveals a curious past with much of interest, tragedy and mystery.

Legend tells of Indian powwows in the valley at the foot of Capitol Hill drained by the St. James Creek into the eastern branch of the Potomac River which took its name from the Indian tribe, the Anacostia.

A map of the area dated 1792 shows Tiber Creek joined to St. James Creek by a canal. The canal and creek separated the southwest extremity of Washington City into Buzzard and Greenleaf's Points. The entire section was commonly called "Turkey Buzzard Point." Hence, the "Fort at Turkey Buzzard."

Throughout the years, the post has had various names. Until it was named Washington Arsenal in 1857, it had been the United States Arsenal at Greenleaf's Point. In February, 1881, it became United States Barracks, Washington, D. C., and later the same year, Washington Barracks.

Army War College

In 1927, it was redesignated Army War College. And in 1935, to honor Major General Andrew A. Humphreys, it was named Fort Humphreys.

In 1939, it again was named Army War College. During World War II, for administrative convenience and since the command of the post was separate from the college, the titles Army War College (Post) and Army War College (School) were used.

In 1948, the post gained the name now used in honor of the commander of the Army ground forces during World War II, Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair, who was killed at Normandy, France, July 25, 1944.

Major Pierre C. L'Enfant selected Greenleaf's Point as the site for a "great military works, to secure the city from invasion."

First mention of fortification of the point tells that in 1794 it was the site of a one-gun battery under command of Captain Andrew J. Villiard, a Frenchman who had served under the Marquis de La Fayette during the American Revolution.

Arsenal Born In 1803

In 1803, Congress appropriated funds for the first arsenal buildings to be built here. From records for 1803-04 it appears there was a military detachment stationed here then. A roster signed by Brigadier General J. A. Wilkinson, commanding the Army of the United States, reported 31 military persons stationed in Washington City, Columbia.

In the statement of expense, 1803-04, on fortifications, arsenals, armories, and magazines, was itemized, "To George Blagden for erecting a building adjoining the barracks at Greenleaf's Point \$308.32; salary to Hezekiah Rogers, storekeeper for June 1803; and to Broham & Buys for repairs to barracks, January 30, 1804, \$4.93."

An early report tells of the outstanding and unexpected aid given our forces during the War of 1812 when a company of British soldiers intent on destroying the powder magazine here were either killed or mangled by the explosion of powder hidden in a dry well.

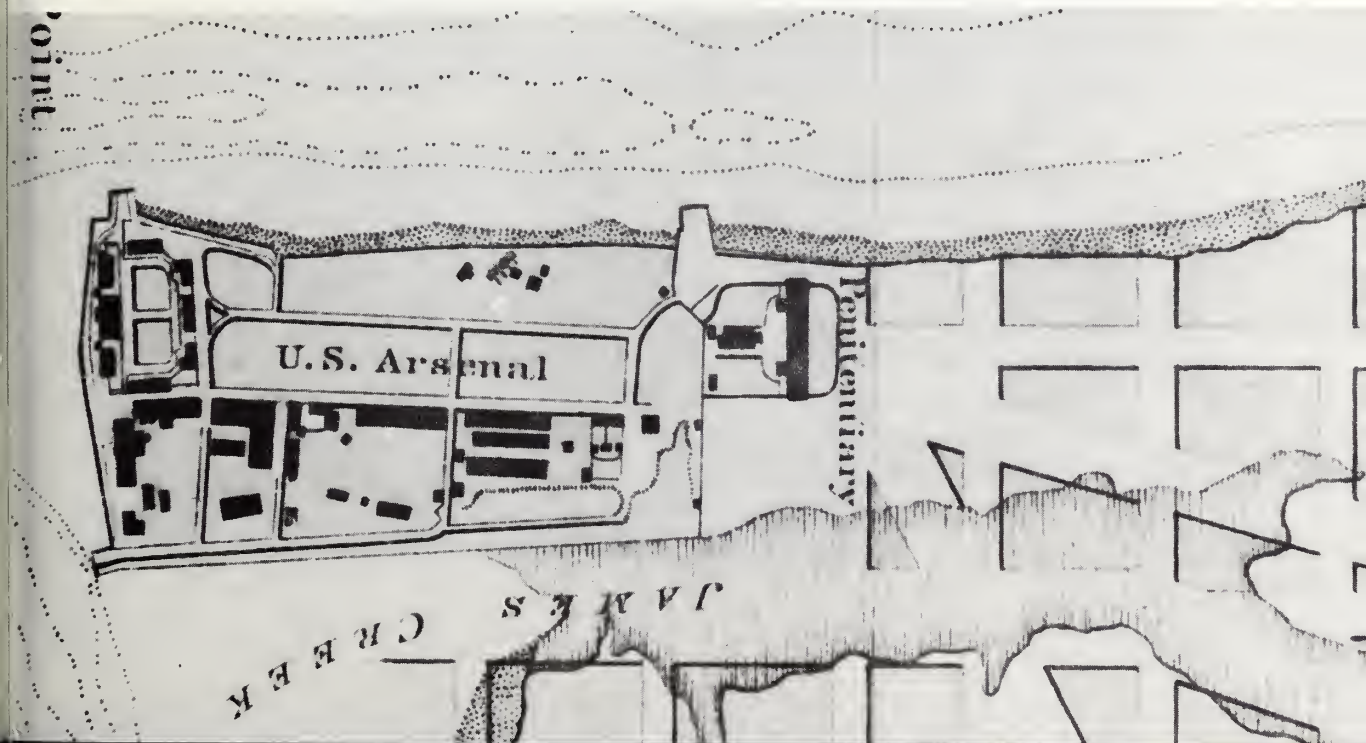
In writing of this event, John Clagett Proctor, noted Washington historian said, "though the Arsenal did not participate in a defensive way, yet it materially contributed to the enemy slain during that memorable August 1814."

In his article of May 23, 1943, in the Washington Sunday Star, Proctor gives this graphic account of the explosion.

Fort Figures In War Of 1812

"...immediately after entering the city, (Washington) the British sought out all the military stores to destroy them and it was in doing this that many were slain at the Arsenal. Dr. James Ewell, a Capitol Hill practicing physician at the time, cared for the wounded and in his recollection tells the following story of the disastrous explosion that occurred at that time:

"There were also 47 of the British soldiers who were most miserably mangled by the terrible explosion at Greenleaf's Point, the greater part of whom would certainly have perished, as the Government made no provision for them until after the third day, had it not been for the admiral's gold, which by immediate transmutation into sugar, coffee, tea, milk, rice, arrow root, bread, meats, vegetables, and fruits was applied to sustain their exhausted frames.



"It may gratify the generous readers on more accounts than one to hear the tragical history of that affair.

"On the 25th a British captain with a company of soldiers marched down on Greenleaf's Point to destroy the powder magazine. On reaching the spot, they found the magazine empty, the powder on the day before having been taken out and thrown into a dry well. The British, being strangers to this fact, threw a lighted match into the well. A most tremendous explosion ensued, whereby the officers and about 30 of the men were killed and the rest most shockingly mangled. Some of these unfortunate victims of gunpowder were seen flying in the air to great distances, and others were totally buried alive under tons of earth thrown upon them."

Arsenal Destroyed, Rebuilt

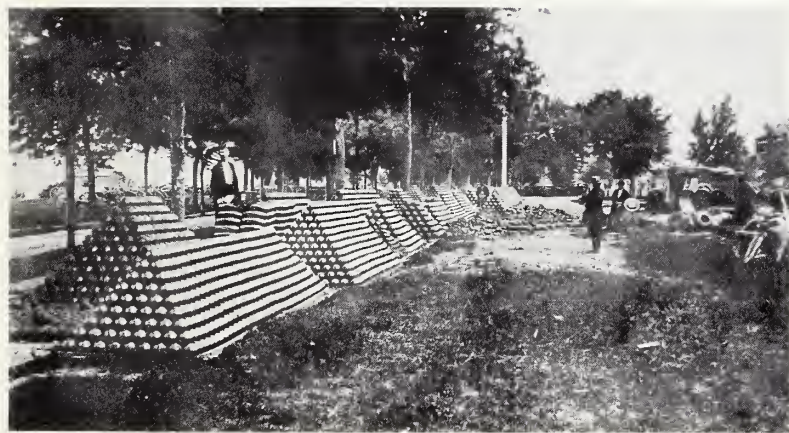
Men from the Arsenal had hidden the powder which they could not take with them to the northern defenses of the city. No one will ever know whether the explosion was caused by carelessness on the part of the British, or by some other means.

At any rate, all of the Arsenal buildings then in existence were destroyed. Work began immediately to rebuild the Arsenal.

Eventually the Arsenal grew to be a quadrangle of buildings approximately where the present National War College building is today.

For many years the Arsenal was a distributing center for guns from the nearby "manufacturies" and during its development, ordnancemen were employed to mend and clean guns and to provide carriages for cannon.

Later, activities at the Arsenal included designing and constructing war material such as gun carriages, caissons for artillery, implements and equipment, and preparation





of munitions of war. Rocket testing and manufacture, probably the first in the nation, were mentioned as early as 1825.

The Arsenal was a busy place in the period between the War of 1812 and the Mexican War. Buildings were enlarged and modern equipment was installed for the scientific ordnance experiments conducted here.

The Washington Guide of 1837 reports there were "on hand 800 iron cannon principally large caliber and 30 brass cannon and about 4,000 stands of arms."

For many years the Arsenal housed the first U. S. Federal Penitentiary on its northernmost acres. In 1826, the Government purchased a parcel of land 400 feet wide just north of the small Arsenal reservation as the site for the penitentiary.

The site, which extended to T Street, was placed under jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior and the building was constructed under direction of Charles Bullfinch. It was separated from the Post by a heavy brick wall since it was an entirely separate establishment. The penitentiary was essentially one large building placed at right angles to the long axis of the present post. The west end of this building extended almost to the Potomac and occupied the spot in front of which Quarters 14 of the general "officers' row" now stands.

President Andrew Jackson, in a message to Congress December 7, 1839, reported: "The penitentiary is ready for reception of convicts, and only awaits the necessary legislation to put it into operation; as one object of which



I beg leave to recall to your attention the propriety of providing suitable compensation for the officer charged with its inspection."

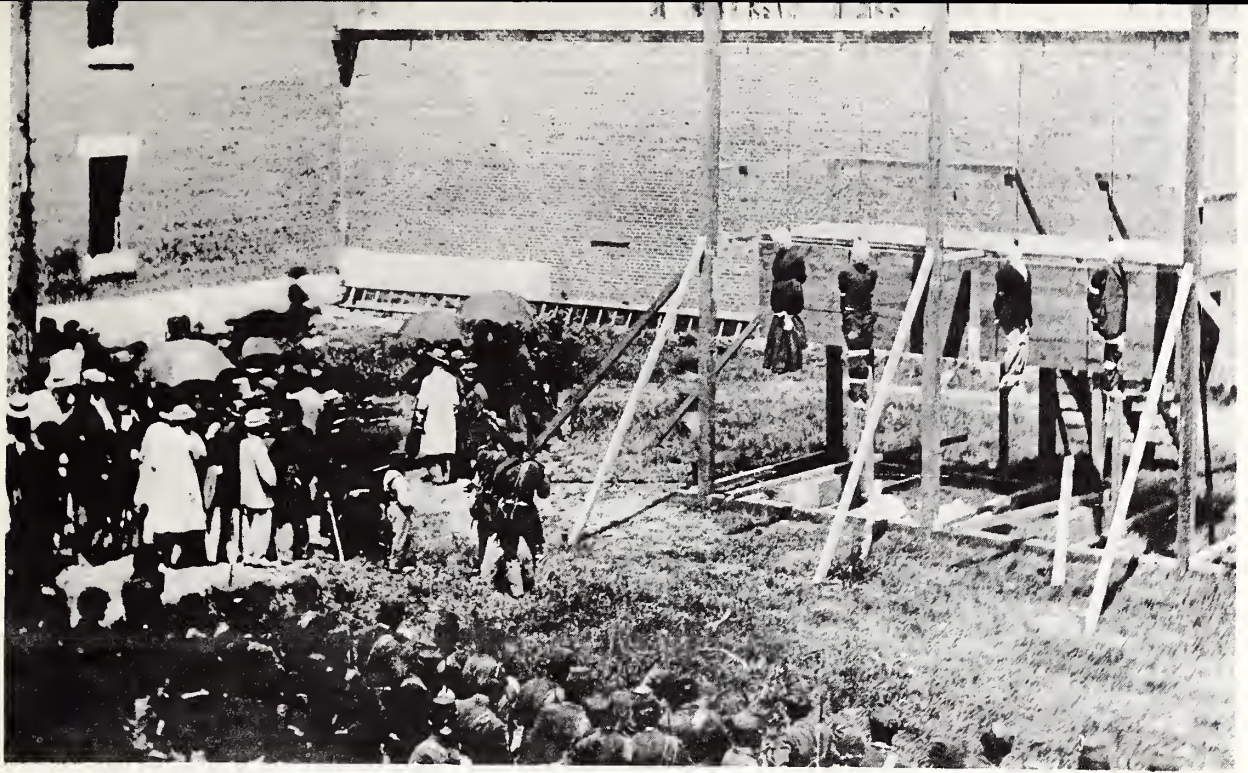
Congress, by act of March 3, 1857, authorized the purchase of property north of the penitentiary grounds, lying between James Creek Canal and the Potomac River. This brought the reservation up to 69 acres, separated by the penitentiary area, and extended the Arsenal north to P Street. The St. James Creek and canal flowed where the houses on NCO Row and all buildings east of that line are now located.

Penitentiary Vacated

President Lincoln, little knowing of events which would take place there in three years, had ordered the then Secretary of Interior Caleb Smith to turn over the penitentiary "with its premises and appurtenances" to the War Department as speedily as possible and the "prisoners confined therein you will cause to be transported securely, with suitable escort, to such place or places within the United States as you may be able to provide for their maintenance and imprisonment....and for so doing this shall be your warrant."

The War between the States accelerated the activities of the Arsenal and the old penitentiary buildings, taken over in 1862 for storage were filled to bursting with enormous stores of ordnance.

The post hospital, mostly of tent pavilions erected on land north of T Street, was filled to overflowing during the Civil War. According to John Wells Burkley, surgeon-in-charge of the Patent Office Hospital, there were 1,000 beds in the post hospital here.



Several incidents which add no dignity to the history of the old post occurred during the Civil War period. Two of these were serious explosions in connection with munitions manufacture. On June 17, 1864, 21 women employees were killed in a powder explosion at the experimental laboratory which had been erected in 1844 by Captain Alfred Mordecai, the post commander, and an early ballistics expert.

Earlier, an explosion in the main building of the penitentiary caused the deaths of two men who were trapped when 23 cartridges containing 58 pounds of powder were accidentally set off.

A military commission tried, condemned, and ordered the execution of four of those accused of conspiracy in the Lincoln assassination. The trial began just 25 days after actor John Wilkes Booth shot the President and lasted 53 days. In addition to eight of the conspirators tried at the

Arsenal, others, among them high ranking Confederates, were tried in absentia. Testimony of over 400 deponents was taken.

Four of the prisoners, Mrs. Mary Surratt, George A. Atzerodt, David E. Herold and Lewis Payne, were found guilty and hanged. (Mrs. Surratt was the first American woman to be executed by Federal order.) Their bodies were placed in pine boxes and buried in trenches previously made under the scaffold. Boxes and graves, viewed by the convicted as they climbed the steps to the gallows, were a gruesome reminder of the fate to come.

"Last Act Of Tragedy"

A Star reporter of the time summed the occasion up in this manner:

"The last act of the tragedy of the 19th century is ended, and the curtain dropped forever upon the lives of four of its actors. Payne, Herold, Atzerodt, and Mrs. Surratt have paid the penalty of their awful crime."

During the trials, the prisoners were incarcerated in the old penitentiary cells. The building, erected during the terms of John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, was a little over 300 feet long and 50 feet wide and three stories high.

Part Of Penitentiary Still Stands

The wall near which the gallows was erected extended south from the east wing of the penitentiary and then west at a point near the present tennis courts. It is believed the bodies were interred near where the practice tennis board is presently located. It is also believed the court room was located in the east wing of the penitentiary which is now Quarters 2-B.

Bodies Removed

Both wings of the building were left and remodeled when the cell blocks were razed in 1869. The west wing has disappeared with the many changes in the post's history. The bodies were removed and reburied in unmarked graves in private cemeteries at the time the old structure was razed.



Bricks salvaged from the penitentiary were used to build the wall along P Street from the Potomac River to St. James Creek Canal and "to build a structure 700 feet in length and two stories in height east of the main roadway and north of the penitentiary building," according to a clipping from an unidentified newspaper of 1869.

Aftermath Of Execution

This clipping goes on to report that "the remains of the assassin Booth which are buried just east of the new wall of that part of the building used as the warden's dwelling will be reached in the removal of the prison...remains of the other assassins Mrs. Surratt, Payne, Herold and Atzerodt, with the Andersonville jailer, Wirz, lie buried in the order named south of the eastern portion, and will not necessarily be disturbed...General Grant will order them to be removed, as also the scaffold, which is still standing just as it was left after the execution, with the

exception that small portions of it have been cut away by relic hunters among the ordnance men stationed there."

Following the Civil War, active use of the Arsenal dwindled with the cessation of hostilities. Until it was abolished in 1881, the Arsenal had few military activities.

The Model Arsenal then here exhibited all known ordnance weapons and munitions of war. These memorabilia had been collected by Alfred Mordecai, the ordnance officer who, as a captain, had been involved with naval officers from the Washington Navy Yard in testing Hale's rocket, one of the first rockets tested in this country.

Ordnance Experiments

A ballistic pendulum for experiments in the science of gunnery and tests to improve the use and control of gunpowder and heavy artillery were important contributions here during Mordecai's tenure, as were trials of repeating pistols. The board testing the pistols found that of four tested "Colt's revolving pistol is better adapted to the service of

mounted troops than any other repeating pistol offered . . . substituted for the present cavalry pistol."

When the Arsenal was abolished, the Quartermaster Department took over and the buildings were for a time used to store commissary items, largely brown sugar.





General Hospital And Walter Reed

From 1898 until 1909, a general hospital -- forerunner of Walter Reed Army Hospital -- was located here. Major Walter Reed, for whom the hospital is named, achieved fame for his contribution to the discovery of the cause of yellow fever. Although his public prominence came from this, Major Walter Reed participated in many other fields of research, such as erysipelas, pneumonia, abdominal typhus, malarial fevers, and diphtheria. In 1895, his appearance before the District of Columbia Medical Society sounded the death knell for opposition to the use of antitoxin in prevention of this latter disease.

While serving at the Army Medical School, Major Reed was stricken with appendicitis. His good friend Major William C. Borden, assigned to the General Hospital here, performed surgery but, weakened by this chronic ailment and by his ceaseless devotion to duty, he succumbed to peritonitis on November 23, 1902.

The Post Dispensary and the IADC bachelor officers quarters now occupy the buildings in which he worked and died.



Early Schools

Beginning with 1894, the complexion of the installation changed from the strictly military to one of a scholarly mien.

Throughout the years since, a variety of Army schools have been conducted here.

During the Spanish American War the Post Hospital which was redesignated as a General hospital under the exclusive control of the Surgeon General, established a Corps of Instruction to train Hospital Corps Nurses and dietitians.

Among other activities of the post during the Spanish American War was the training of signal troops for the United States Volunteer Signal Corps, the training of cooks and bakers and administrative personnel at the Adjutant General's schools.

The Engineer School of Application was moved from Fort Totten, New York, to Washington Barracks in 1901, where it remained until 1919.

Because of the geographical proximity of the post to the Nation's capital, it has grown throughout the years into a high level military educational center.

Gathered together here now are three sister colleges devoted to the task of training senior officers of the Armed Forces of the United States, officials of other government agencies, and senior officers of member countries of the Organization of American States.

The Spanish War had emphasized the need for additional training for senior officers in the problem of handling large bodies of troops. The first official mention of a college for this purpose occurred in a report to the War Department in 1899. As a result of Mr. Elihu Root's

interest while Secretary of War, development of both the Army War College and the War Department General Staff forged ahead. Much of the actual development and study took place on this post.

During 1900, a board of officers was appointed by the War Department to assist in planning for a college for the Army. Plans were completed in 1901 and the Army War College came into being. It was the first of the schools of higher learning to be situated at Fort McNair.

Plans for the college building and one for the Engineer School which was being transferred from Fort Totten were prepared and Captain John S. Sewell, Corps of Engineers, was placed in charge of construction.

Preliminary work on the Engineer School building in 1902 proved that the ground would not support its weight. That project was canceled. The school was housed here until 1919 when it moved to Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., now Fort Belvoir.

Foundations for the War College building were completed in mid 1904, except for a terrace which would occupy the site of an old Arsenal barracks, still in use as quarters

for the garrison.

That fall its first class assembled and its work as a college began under Major General S. B. M. Yount, the first commandant. No diplomas were issued these nine men, including Tasker H. Bliss, George W. Goethals, and Joseph T. Dickman.



Captain J. J. Pershing was a member of the first class but did not complete the course as he was detailed as an observer in the Russo-Japanese War. In 1924, as General of the Armies and Chief of Staff, USA, he was presented with a diploma as honor graduate.

Instruction at the Army War College continued until World War I when it was suspended. Again in World War II, classes were suspended.

With completion of the new building in 1907, destruction of the remaining Arsenal buildings began.

Today only five buildings of the last century remain here: Quarters 3-B, variously known as the "Model Arsenal," the "Administrative Building," "Arsenal Headquarters"; the old hospital, now bachelor officers' quarters for the Inter-American Defense College; the "dead house," now the dental clinic; and the "guard house," now Quarters 27-B; and the "eastern edifice" of the old penitentiary, now officers' quarters 2-B.

During World War I the great need for officers attending classes at the Army War College and the college staff caused the Secretary of War to suspend instruction there on May 25, 1917, with an early graduation for the class then in session.

The college reopened that fall with the title "General Staff College" under command of Major General James W. McAndrews, who assumed command of Washington Barracks as well as duty as Commandant of the College.



The college was given back its original name, Army War College, on August 15, 1921. General of the Armies Pershing stated that he could not have organized the American Expeditionary Forces in France without the help of the graduates of the College. It had earned its name and its proud title had returned.

During World War II when courses of instruction at the Army War College were suspended, the Secretary of War took separate action to suspend the classes each year, thus keeping the college officially active but in stand-by status.

During the war years, the building was occupied at different times by War Plans Division of the General Staff, National Headquarters of Selective Service, and Army Ground Forces.



THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

A joint Army-Navy Staff College established in 1943 was the forerunner of the National War College. Army-Navy Staff College was not only highly successful as a wartime venture, but more importantly, it served to broaden the horizon of thinking on the postwar structure of our higher military educational system. Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, President of the War Department Military Education Board, recorded in his 1946 report the first concrete description of what was to become The National War College:

"The College is concerned with grand strategy and the utilization of the national resources necessary to implement that strategy... Its graduates will exercise a great influence on the formulation of national and foreign policy in both peace and war...."

Up to this point in the development of the concept, it had

been assumed that the coordination of education of the military and civilian components of government could be accomplished by having separate Colleges within a "National Security University" -- the civilian component of which was tentatively termed a "State Department College." However, the Secretaries of Army and Navy issued an invitation to the Secretary of State to join with them in the establishment of a College as envisaged in the Gerow Report, quoted in part above. The Secretary of State accepted.

Late in 1945, Army-Navy Staff College -- its wartime function at an end -- was closed and work on the establishment of the new college proceeded. In February 1946, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, then Chief of Staff of the Army, designated the Army War College building here as the site of the new College.

The first class at the National War College convened in August of 1946.

Since then, and without interruption, the College has continued to make its annual contribution to the roll of government officials qualified through previous careful selection and a year's study at the College, to engage in the formulation and the implementation of national security policy, particularly in the politico-military field.

The history of the development of the College is marked by close adherence to the original concept, but with the curriculum modified each year to keep abreast of the changing world situation.



INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES

The only modern architectural structure at Fort McNair is the home of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. It was dedicated in 1960 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had this to say about the College:

"In this age in which the physical sciences are revolutionizing the military art, few factors mean as much to our national security as the ability of our military leaders to keep pace with this revolution. To assure them of such knowledge is the special and exacting task of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. I am happy to take this occasion to state my confidence that the faculty of the Industrial College is performing this task with remarkable and commendable success. So doing, it is rendering vital service to the very safety of our Nation."

Prior to 1946, the Army Industrial College had carried on a similar course of instruction. Although it was an Army school, the Army Industrial College graduated many

Navy and Marine officers. Nearly 1,200 students, including Dwight D. Eisenhower, had completed the college course before World War II.

In 1946, when the college was renamed the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, it became in fact, a joint services institution.

The Industrial College of the Armed Forces is the country's senior college in the military educational system dealing with study in the fields of management of and use of this country's resources for national security. It is a Joint Service operation with a student body made up of senior officers of all services and experienced officials of major governmental departments and agencies.

The College conducts advanced courses of study in the economic and industrial aspects of national security, and in management of resources, from the viewpoint of both national and world affairs. The purpose, is to further the preparation of selected officers and officials for important positions in the national security structure.

Colleges Compared

Student officers attending the National War College or the Industrial College of the Armed Forces are being trained as leaders in foreign policy and national military strategy, or in the "business" side of national security planning, with economic-industrial emphasis.





INTER-AMERICAN DEFENSE COLLEGE

The third college here, the Inter-American Defense College, formally opened October 9, 1962, as the result of an idea born in 1957 at the Inter-American Defense Board.

Discussions held by member nations of the Organization of American States led to official approval to establish a quadrilingual college of advanced studies in the military, economic, political, and social factors that constitute essential components of Inter-American defense for senior military officers of member nations, in order to enhance the preparation of selected personnel of the Armed Forces of the American Republics for undertakings of international cooperation.

Fort McNair was chosen from several sites offered as being that most suitable for such a college.

The Inter-American Defense College is an advanced studies institute for senior officers of 19 member nations of the Inter-American Defense Board.

The Inter-American Defense College curriculum includes the study of the international situation and world blocks, the inter-American system and its role, strategic concepts of war, and a planning exercise for hemispheric defense.

The Inter-American Defense College ranks with the National War College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, but unlike its two neighbors does not report to the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Instead, it operates under the Inter-American Defense Board, an agency within the Organization of American States.

Each member nation may send up to three students of the rank of colonel or equivalent, whose backgrounds would qualify them to participate in the solution of hemispheric defense problems. The maximum student load is 57 at this time.

The Inter-American Defense College occupies two buildings here. Barracks No. 1 of the buildings built for the Engineer School in 1903 and the east wing of the old General Hospital were vacated by the U.S. Army Garrison to provide housing for the college. Both of these buildings have been rehabilitated and the west end of the post mess hall, also erected in 1903, has been converted into an officers' field mess.

The barracks, now the Academic Building, contains an auditorium with a seating capacity of 100, administrative offices, and classrooms.

The auditorium is equipped with the latest in electronic simultaneous translating equipment to permit students to hear lectures by a broad range of guest speakers in their own languages.

POST COMMANDERS PASS IN REVIEW

James Simonson, 2nd Lieutenant	1822
Wolvert E. Williams, 1st Lieutenant	1823-24
William H. Wade, Major	1825-26
William H. Bell, Major	1826
John Symington, 1st Lieutenant	1828
	1831-32
George D. Ramsay, Captain	1832-33
Alfred Mordecai, Captain	1843-45
	1847-49
Alfred Mordecai, Brevet Major	1851-53
William H. Bell, Major	1858
George D. Ramsay, Brevet Major	1858-62
James G. Benton, Major	1863-64
H. Stockton, 2nd Lieutenant	1865
George D. Ramsay, Brevet Major General	1869
Franklin D. Callender, Brevet Brigadier General	1870
	1874-75
John McNutt, Brevet Colonel	1875-78
George W. McKee, Captain	1878-79
James M. Whittemore, Lieutenant Colonel	1880-81
Romeyn B. Ayres, Colonel	1881-84
Horatio G. Gibson, Colonel	1885-90
LaRhett L. Livingston, Colonel	1891-93
Henry W. Closson, Colonel	1894-95
Francis L. Guenther, Colonel	1896-99
George C. Greenough, Major	1900
William H. Black, Major	1901-03
Edward Burr, Major	1903
	1906

William C. Langfitt, Lieutenant Colonel	1906-10
Eveleth E. Winslow, Major	1906-07
Robert R. Raymond, Major	1908-11
William Barden, Major	1911
William D. Connor, Major	1912
Mason M. Patrick, Colonel	1916-17
Henry Jervey, Colonel	1917
John N. Hodges, Major	1917
William W. Harts, Colonel	1917
Frederick V. Abbot, Brigadier General	1917-19
James W. McAndrews, Major General	1919-21
Brown, Brigadier General	1921
E. F. McGlachlin, Jr., Brigadier General	1921-23
H. E. Ely, Major General	1923-27
William D. Connor, Major General	1927-32
George S. Simonds, Major General	1932-35
Malin Craig, Major General	1935
Grant, Brigadier General	1935-37
J. L. DeWitt, Major General	1937-39
P. B. Peyton, Brigadier General	1939-40
N. B. Rehkopf, Colonel	1940-41
E. A. Williams, Lieutenant Colonel	1941
T. F. Bresnahan, Lieutenant Colonel	1941-42
George I. Smith, Colonel	1943
W. N. Todd, Jr., Colonel	1943-45
Berry, Colonel	1945
Charles H. Owens, Colonel	1946-48
Ernest C. Norman, Colonel	1948-50
Julian E. Raymond, Colonel	1950-51
Harold R. Jackson, Colonel	1951-53
Joe D. Moss, Colonel	1953-54
George W. Bibbs, Colonel	1954-56
Ralph H. Wiltamuth, Colonel	1956

Alexander G. Stone, Colonel	1956-57
George C. Duehring, Colonel	1957-60
Lloyd S. McLean, Lieutenant Colonel	1960
Glenn J. McGowan, Colonel	1960-61
Horace E. Townsend, Colonel	1961-



GENERAL

LESLEY J. MCNAIR

On June 15, 1904, a young cadet just turned twenty-one graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, and received a commission as second lieutenant of Artillery.

After nearly 44 years service during which he reached the rank of lieutenant general, Lesley J. McNair was killed in action July 25, 1944, shortly after being assigned to the European Theater of Operations to observe in action the troops whose training he had directed.

As a junior officer, the man for whom the post is now named, served with the field artillery and ordnance at several posts throughout the country. He was ordered to France in 1913 as an observer of French Artillery, and again in 1917 with the American Expeditionary Forces, re-





maining at General Headquarters in Paris until May 1919. During that time he received the temporary rank of brigadier general. Between World Wars I and II he filled many positions in the operations and training field.

In March 1942, when the War Department General Staff was reorganized, he was named Commanding General of Army Ground Forces. While on an inspection tour in the North African Theater of Operations (Tunisia) he was wounded by shell fragments. Returning to the United States shortly thereafter, he was again assigned as Commanding General, Army Ground Forces, here at McNair, a position he held until he went to the European Theater of Operations early in 1944.

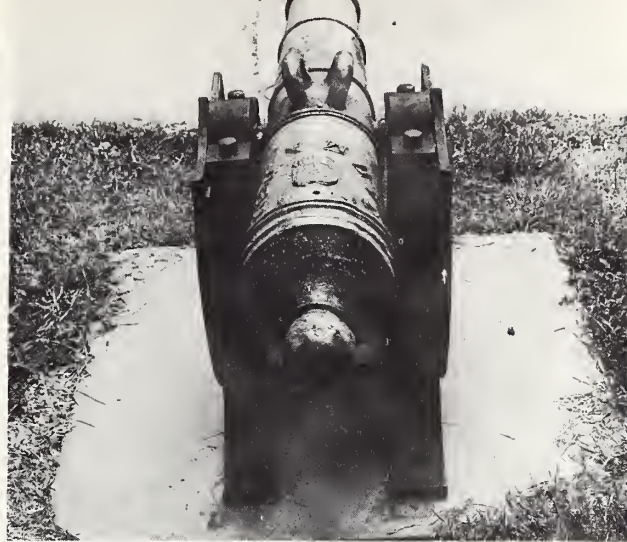
General McNair was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal with two Oak-Leaf Clusters, and the medal of the French Legion of Honor (officer).



OLD RELICS

More than 30 old cannons, mortars, and other historical trophies and ornaments, some weighing over 1800 pounds, are on display here. They are all appropriate fixtures on a post with a historical past. As ornaments, they enhance several entrances to Fort McNair buildings as well as the main gate.





A supplemental pamphlet, "A Short Guide to the Guns at Fort McNair," furnishes a summary of the history of these battle relics of wars in which men of the United States Armed Forces have valiently defended this Nation.

INTERESTING ANECDOTES

An interesting anecdote connected with the construction of the National War College building concerns Stanford White of the architectural firm of McKim, Meade, and White of New York City, who were commissioned to design the building.

As he approached the flagpole area, under the escort of an Engineer officer, on his way to inspect the magnificent college building his firm had designed, he inquired the reason why the Government had not, as planned, torn down the three sets of quarters in the center of the post, since they blocked the view of the War College from that area. The Engineer officer replied, "Mr. White, there is currently an acute shortage of housing in Washington and these quarters are desperately needed to house officers and their families, so we have not yet been able to tear them down."

Protesting that the Government had not kept its word and that the beautiful vista he had planned was spoiled, Mr. White is reported to have ordered his carriage turned around and he left the post without visiting the building at all.

Personnel Problems

Personnel problems in the military are nothing new. As far back as February 1833, when Captain George D. Ramsay, commanding officer of the Arsenal, suggested the need for better guarding of the Arsenal than was provided by a watchman paid \$1.25 a day, he ran into opposition. The Chief of Ordnance stated that the Ordnance Department would not willingly introduce a system of enlisted guards at the Washington Arsenal or any other arsenals,

"it having never been contemplated by law or regulation, which were based on the assumption that enlisted men of ordnance be employed as laborers or mechanics, however in an emergency they might well be used for short periods only."

When the Secretary of War, the Honorable Lewis Cass, directed the Quartermaster General, General Jessup, to inspect the troop quarters and buildings at Washington Arsenal in 1835, he reported, "Viewing the subject in its military bearing....they are retained in this city for the protection of that establishment (the Arsenal) and the penitentiary, (the latter commands the approach to the former); and in the event of insurrection, either within or without, ten determined men, holding the penitentiary, would be able to prevent succor from reaching the arsenal on the land side. The penitentiary is certainly in an improper position, but that cannot be remedied; should its inmates succeed in obtaining at anytime the mastery over their keepers, they might readily seize and hold the arsenal. If troops, then, be necessary to protect it, they should at least be stationed between it and the point whence an attack is to be expected...."

On October 28, 1835, the Chief of Ordnance objected to placing troops of the line at Washington Arsenal, because the 62nd Article of War provided that when troops of two corps united at a military post the senior officer present would be in command. This would put a line officer in command at the arsenal and it was deemed this officer could not have the necessary acquaintance with ordnance duties to properly supervise, even with great abilities in his own line of service; the separation of command could only be directed by the President.

This was born out in 1878 when a controversy arose between the arsenal commander and the commanding officer of the artillery battery stationed here. "The artillery officer held... buildings formerly assigned for temporary use refused to relinquish any of the buildings unless ordered to do so by higher authority." It required an order from the General of the Army to set them straight. The order specified that "the two commands are distinct as if at separate posts," with the artillery officer commanding the troops without "right to interfere in the affairs of the Ordnance Department," and the ordnance officer commanding the arsenal -- directing and controlling "all details of service connected with it."

"To clarify matters, all concerned are informed, to avoid further confusion, communications to the artillery commander would be addressed; 'To the Commanding Officer, Artillery Troops, Washington Arsenal, D. C.'"

Recruiting

Recruiting methods in times past have not always been as psychologically geared as they are today. This advertisement during the War with Mexico was typical of efforts to recruit manpower:

"Wanted, one hundred active, brave young men to serve with rocket and mountain howitzer batteries, now preparing by the Ordnance Department for immediate departure.

"In pay, provisions, and clothing, this corps will be superior to any yet raised, and, from the kind of arms, will be constantly in advance where the hardest fighting may be expected.

"The highest character for courage and physical ability will be required for admission."

The same poster offered two dollars to citizens for each recruit persuaded to enlist.



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Advertisement

Building where Lincoln conspirators were tried gets a second life

By **John Kelly**, Published: June 14

They say that **Mary Surratt** wept as she heard the gallows that would end her life being constructed outside her prison cell.

A natural enough reaction. Rare is the person who knows the exact time and manner of his or her death. Perhaps she believed she was innocent (doubtful). Perhaps she was bitter that she hadn't received a fair trial (likely). Whatever the reason, the convicted conspirator in the assassination of **Abraham Lincoln** couldn't stop her tears. Some say she cries them still in the building where she was sentenced to hang.

That three-story building is on the grounds of Fort McNair, about two miles southwest of the U.S. Capitol, the gleaming dome of which is visible through the upper windows. Like Mary Surratt and most of the other conspirators, the building was sentenced to death. Unlike them, it survived, though that wasn't always a sure thing.

"I can't imagine a worse thing than seeing a building like this destroyed," said **Hans Binnendijk** as he led me and some of his colleagues through what was until recently known as Building 20.

Hans is vice president for research and applied learning at National Defense University, the main tenant at the military installation at the confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia. We were on the top floor. Signs of renovation were everywhere: exposed beams, hanging wires, plaster dust. But 146 years ago. . . .

"Right over here is where the defendants sat," said Hans, pointing toward one end of the room. Spectators lucky enough to snag a ticket to the trial would have been at the other end. Between them were the military judges and members of the press. And in the center: the witness stand.

The producers of "The Conspirator," **Robert Redford's** recent movie about the Surratt trial, came to take measurements of the room. They were fortunate the room was still there to measure.

Designed in 1826 by **Charles Bulfinch**, the building was originally part of a federal penitentiary. The third floor was a laundry.

"It was the only area in the complex large enough to hold a trial," said Hans.

Over the years, the other parts of the penitentiary were torn down, and only Building 20 remained. It was threatened several times with demolition. (**Stanford White**, who designed the neoclassical Roosevelt Hall nearby, hated it.)

“People knew it was there, but no one really cared about it,” Hans said. But **Col. Owen Powell**, commander of the fort in the late 1990s, recognized its historic importance and ordered it saved. Now, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is overseeing a \$4 million renovation.

The building will house offices, but the top floor will be returned to how it looked during the trial, complete with furniture used in Redford’s movie. (The movie’s exterior scenes were actually filmed at Fort Pulaski, in Savannah, Ga.) Though it’s on a military base, Hans hopes the public can visit when the renovation is complete, in November.

So the building has a new life — and a new name. It’s been redubbed Grant Hall. “It’s harder to knock down Grant Hall than Building 20,” Hans said.

It has an old life, too: Ghost stories abound, said **Susan Lemke**, NDU’s special collections librarian. “Presumably she wept near a window,” Susan said of Mary Surratt. “There’s a window there that never dries out.” In hot weather, it’s always fogged. In cold weather, always frosted. Snow melts on a path outside, like footsteps to the gallows. (There’s a tennis court now where Surratt swung.)

Footfalls have been heard in empty rooms as well as the sound of furniture being dragged across a wooden floor.

Hans is dismissive. “The fact is, it’s an old building,” he said. “It creaks.”

I scanned the room, trying to imagine it as it was in the summer of 1865, a president recently martyred, a nation on edge, a trial underway, a woman weeping.

“This was a place where, in some ways, the Civil War ended,” Hans said.

We need your help

You can be part of history by donating to Camp Moss Hollow. For years, Post readers have been supporting this summer camp for at-risk kids. Please make a gift by visiting www.washingtonpost.com/camp. Or mail a check payable to “Send a Kid to Camp” to Send a Kid to Camp, P.O. Box 96237, Washington, D.C. 20090-6237.

Or feed our coffers by feeding yourself. Go to any Clyde’s restaurant or the Old Ebbitt Grill and order any **Clyde’s burger**. They’re made from local, all natural, grass-fed beef cattle, and proceeds Wednesday benefit Moss Hollow.

FORT LESLEY J. McNAIR
WASHINGTON, D.C.

DRAWER 13

WASHINGTON IN GENERAL

